

17-February-2015

I am writing today to encourage you to support the HB 5871. Firefighters are continually, in the course of their duties, exposed to numerous cancer causing agents that result in cancers. As an emergency room nurse I see the immediate effects of smoke exposure: we treat smoke inhalation patients with cyanide poisoning kits. The long term exposures to these deadly chemicals can be just a catastrophic.

Let me you tell you about my husband, Daniel Davis. He started firefighting when he was sixteen years old as a volunteer for Eagleville Fire Department. He progressed thru the ranks and the career, part time to eventually full time. He was a career Captain in the Town of Mansfield at the time of his diagnosis. Like most firefighters, he was highly trained and certified: Safety Officer, Fire Marshall and Fire Instructor in the state of Connecticut. He was safety conscious throughout his years serving the town.

In the summer of 2007 he began having back pain that we attributed to 21 years of firefighting, as time progressed and his symptoms worsened he finally got an MRI in April of 2008. It took quite a while to get to this point because insurance companies insist on least invasive first: three plain xrays, primary and orthopedic consults, emergency room visit and physical therapy done first- it was labeled arthritis. The MRI, however, showed a more sinister diagnosis: he had a L3 tumor. He was eventually diagnosed with stage 3 Hodgkin's lymphoma: it was in his spine, lungs, spleen, ribs and mediastinum.

True to form, Danny faced the challenges of cancer with full force. He was told he was curable and just wanted to go back to the work he loved. Seven biopsies, three surgeries, seven different chemo regimes and a stem cell transplant were unsuccessful in killing his cancer. On August 18, 2009 he went into Acute respiratory failure and was placed on a ventilator. August 25th, I was told there was no more to be done, I followed Danny's request and terminated life support. I was now a 41 year old widow with two children, ages 11 and 15.

Danny will miss high school graduations, weddings, grandchildren: he missed his oldest on the podium at the Irish dance championships, his youngest driving her quad thru the mud. All the plans we made were taken away. I lost my love, my best friend that day. His death impacted our financial picture as well: medical bills needed to be paid off, household income reduced all while trying to deal with his death.

HB 5871 would help to lighten the burden on families in crisis. These men and women are out risking their lives to protect other people. They are ready to protect and serve 24/7. Now it's your turn to help them and support HB 5871.

Sincerely, Brenda Davis